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LOTTIE BLYE'S MEMORIES

On the 50th anniversary of KRISTALLNACHT, I spoke here at Temple Israel and related my memories of that sad night and time. Unfortunately the events are still the same and are worth repeating, for the important reason that all of us should "Tamid Sachor", always remember!

When we talk about something happening 60 years from now, it seems an eternity away. However, as I look back 60 years, it seems what happened to me, surely happened to someone else in another life. To be honest, I try not to think too much about KRISTALLNACHT and everything revolving around that era in my life, as the memories are too painful.

Now that we are focusing on that time, I too, try to think back on where I was on that fateful night. In fact, I was living in Leipzig with my parents, going to a Jewish school, Karlebach Schule, as we could not go to the German public schools. I was trying to concentrate on school work - Hebrew lessons, sports and all of the usual things young girls like. But that was not to be!

Life in Germany, as I remember it, was always lived in fear. Hitler was growing stronger every day and we knew that as polish Jews, our days were numbered.

Once on my way to school, a big German girl from the Hitler Jugend, shouted at me, "You Jewish cow" Although I was scared to death, I don't know where I got the guts, but I shouted back at her, "I may be a Jew, but you are a cow"

Two weeks before KRISTALLNACHT, the Germans were rounding up all polish-born Jews to deport them somewhere. Several Storm troopers came to our apartment and ordered us to come out with them. Of course we dared not to ask them where they were taking us. Somehow we arrived at the BAHNHOF, a huge railroad station, where we saw many other Jews being shipped out on trains. We had no idea where their destination was, but I seem to recall that the names of DACHAU and BUCHENWALD were surfacing a lot. Just as it was going to be our turn, someone whispered to my father: "Get out of here through the back door ,very slowly".

I can't recall how it happened, but somehow we ended up at the Polish Consulate where we met several hundred other Jews in the same boat. I recall we stayed there for several days and slept on the floor, one person next to the other. We were wall to wall people until we were told it was safe to go home..

The next two weeks we led a very frightening existence; not going to school and barely going into the street, Then a 17 year old Polish Jew, called GRYNSPAN, killed the third secretary of the German Embassy in Paris. GOEBBELS used the event as a pretext to start KRISTALLNACHT. His intention was to frighten the Jews into leaving Germany. The lucky ones succeeded, but most could not. Nobody wanted them. All the doors, including the doors to America, were closed. As we all know now, this was the beginning of the HOLOCAUST.

In 1936 GOEBBELS said:" In ten years, only Jewish graves will be left In Europe.". Unfortunately we did not listen to his words.

On KRISTALLNACHT, for the second time, several Storm Troopers marched up the steps to our apartment, jostled us about and made us leave our apartment. We really had no plan as to where to go. We went first to the Synagogue, where we always worshipped. When we got there, the building was burning and I remember seeing a mountain of prayer books, piled in a heap, and the Germans were putting a match to them. All was utter confusion. All we heard, were store windows being smashed and Jews being chased and beaten, including my own father. And these words echoed in my head: "Juden raus" !(Jews get out). By some miracle someone pulled us down into sort of a cellar. He closed the trap door over our heads and all we kept hearing were Storm troopers running back and forth while we were hiding and afraid to breathe. When the turmoil subsided, we made our way back to the Polish Consulate again. There we were hidden for a few more days.

Shortly after that, my father hired a couple of German smugglers, who helped us cross the border into Poland. I remember we walked in the dark, at night, for what seemed to be an eternity. After we paid these men, they left us. We went on, on foot, trying to avoid the Germans with their guns and huge German Shepards who started to chase

us. Don't ask me how, but God was really watching us that night and we crossed the border. Surprisingly, the polish guards let us in. We staid with my father's relatives near Lodz for several months until my parents sent me to England on the Kinder transport. Unfortunately they could not get a visa and 6 weeks later the war broke out. I never saw my parents again. I lived in London all through the war and came to America in November 1947. I met my wonderful husband, who as fate had it, also came from Leipzig and who survived after joining a group of Italian partisans in the mountain of northern Italy from 1943 to the end of the war...